Tribute to Chetan Anand

Born in Punjab (Pakistan) on January 3, 1915, Chetan Anand graduated from the Government Law College, Lahore and subsequently worked for the BBC and taught at the Doon School, Dehradun, before coming down to Mumbai to sell a film script.

He made his directorial debut with the much-acclaimed *Neecha Nagar* in 1946, which also marked the debut of sitar maestro Ravi Shankar as music director. The film went on to win the Grand Prix at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival and made Chetan Anand the first Indian filmmaker to win an international award.

In the year 1949 he started Navketan Productions along with younger brother Dev Anand. The first film made under this banner was *Afsar*, starring Dev Anand and Suraiya. It was directed by Chetan Anand, who also co-wrote the script along with his wife, Uma. The film turned out to be a moderate success. *Taxi Driver* and *Andhiyan* were other notable films he directed for Navketan.

In the 1960s he set up his own production house Himalaya Films. In 1964 he made *Haqeeqat*, India's first authentic war film, which won him much critical acclaim. The humiliating Indo-China war of 1962 provided the backdrop for this patriotic film. Shot in Ladakh, Chetan Anand used documentary footage of Zhoe En Lai's visit and Nehru addressing the soldiers of the nation on Republic Day. Often the documentary footage merged with the fictional frames in seamless splendour, which very few films were able to replicate. The film's premiere, held in New Delhi, in 1965 was attended by the then President, Dr. Radhakrishnan. It won a certificate of Merit at the National Film Festival.

Chetan Anand with Raaj Kumar on the sets of *Heer Ranjha*

Next came the experimental *Aakhri Khat*, a film where the protagonist was a toddler. The film with no formal script had Chetan Anand follow the moppet. Bunty Behl, with the candid camera. The film, shot on the streets of Mumbai, took three months to complete and marked the debut of superstar Rajesh Khanna. *Aakhri Khat* was India's official entry for Oscar Awards in 1967.

The other important film's of Chetan Anand's career were *Heer Ranjha*, which is the legendary love story of two doomed lovers. *Heer Ranjha*, made by Chetan Anand, was the seventh celluloid version of the story. The film starred Priya Rajvansh and Raj Kumar in lead roles.

Interestingly, the dialogues of *Heer Ranjha* was composed in verse as was the original story. Music by Madan Mohan, *Heer Ranjha* was shot mostly in Chandigarh and Punjab.

Hindustan Ki Kasam, is yet another war film, by Chetan Anand. Then came *Hanste Zakhm*, a touching film about a call girl, who is actually the daughter of a police inspector. The other film *Kudrat* that followed was a multi-starrer with Rajesh Khanna, Vinod Khanna, Hema Malini, Priya Rajvansh. *Hathon Ki Lakeerein*, starring Jackie Shroff and Zeenat Aman, was his last film as director. ●

On STAR Gold

Haqeeqat : August 4, at 7.00 pm.
Heer Ranjha: August 11, at 7.00 pm.
Aakhri Khat: August 18, at 7.00 pm.
Hanste Zakhm: August 25, at 7.00 pm.